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To little Johnnie -
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THE
CHILDREN OF THE BIBLE.



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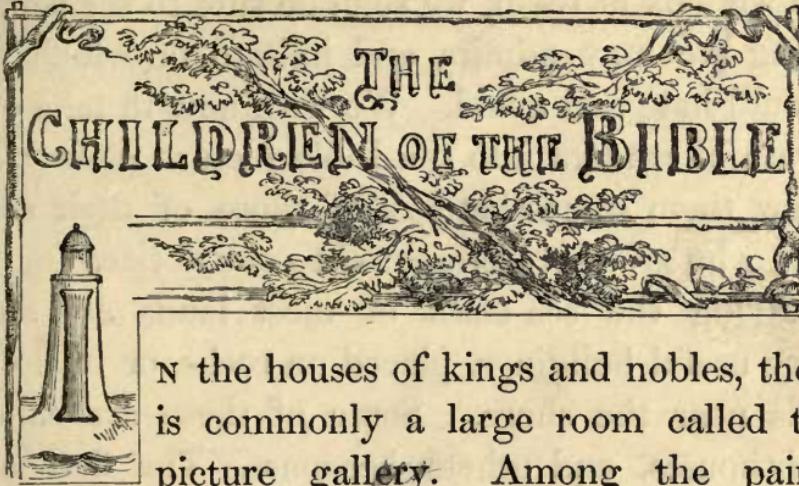
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N the houses of kings and nobles, there is commonly a large room called the picture gallery. Among the paintings hung on the walls, are portraits of kings, queens, and other persons who were once famous in the world. When we look at these, we should think what they once were, and whether their lives were pious and useful, or wicked and hurtful. If they were among those who feared God, these pictures may remind us of what we should copy in their conduct. But if they did not live holy lives, then we may learn from them what to shun. Now, the Bible may be compared to the picture gallery of a king, into which we are invited to look. Here are to be seen pictures of the wise, the good, and the great, of the young and the old.

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As we look at them, we shall be sure to see something we may admire and imitate, or which we should hate and avoid. We wish now to take our youthful readers into the Bible picture gallery, to show them some sketches of those of their own age, who are there presented to our notice.

Along the sea-coast of most lands are seen very useful buildings, placed on rocks, or on lofty hills near the shore. Some of these are called lighthouses, and others beacons. The first are chiefly intended to guide ships into harbour, or to point out the course they should steer; the latter are to warn of rocks and sands, on which vessels may be lost. Such buildings may have been seen by few of our young readers; but there are some kinds of lighthouses and beacons with which they may become more familiar, and they are such as are found in the Bible. They are not built of brick and stone, but of the actions and conduct of people who lived many years ago. And they have been put there that we may be guided safely over the voyage of life, and escape the end of those who have made “shipwreck of

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faith and a good conscience," 1 Tim. i. 19. To some of these we will now attend. Let our young readers pray that the Holy Spirit would bless his own word, and lead us to watch and pray, that we may be saved from dangers more fatal than pointed rocks and hidden sands.



Isaac and Ishmael.

GENESIS xxi. 9—21.

FAR away from England is a country formerly called Canaan, and near to it is another, still known as Arabia. At the part where these two

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lands join is a long and wide desert. Only a few trees and shrubs grow in this barren spot. There are no flowing rivers or broad streams of water. In some places a little rivulet slowly moves along in winter, but which dries up in summer. The heat of the sun burns up nearly all the grass; yet there are a few places where water and pasturage are found. To these spots the shepherds of Arabia bring large flocks of sheep and goats, which quietly feed around the dark-looking tents.

Nearly four thousand years ago, a good man, named Abram, lived in this part of the world. He was rich, though his riches did not consist in houses and lands, or in gold and jewels, but in sheep and cattle. His house was a tent. This was the best kind of dwelling for him, as he often made long journeys with his flocks from place to place. He could soon take down his tent, and put it up again, as he went about the country.

Abram, or Abraham, as he was afterwards called, was not born in Canaan; God brought him from his own land to live there. It was

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promised to him, that from his family or race the Saviour was to come. This was the *great* promise of God, and through it the greatest of all blessings was to be given to sinful man. It is said in the New Testament, that Abraham saw, or foresaw, the day of Jesus, and was glad. He was glad there was a Saviour for his own soul, and who would be a Saviour for all those who should believe in him, in every age.

Abraham had two sons; one named Ishmael, and the other Isaac. Though these brothers had the same father, they had not the same mother; Ishmael was the son of Hagar, and Isaac the son of Sarah. As Ishmael was several years older than his little brother, he ought to have been kind to him, and set a good example. But he did not love him, and was full of envy. Ishmael was so full of spite that he used to mock his brother Isaac. Perhaps he called him ill names, because he knew it had been promised to his father that he should be the father of a great nation.

Abraham was much grieved at the bad conduct of his eldest son, and he sent the wicked boy and

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his mother away from the tent. We do not know that he would have so done, had not God told him that he would take care of them, and make also this child the forefather of numerous tribes of people.

It was early in the morning when Ishmael and his mother were sent from the tent of Abraham. A leatheren bottle of water and some bread were given to them. They must have felt very sorry when they left such a good home as they had long enjoyed. The grief of Ishmael must have been the greater, as he knew it was his bad conduct which had led to their being put away.

The outcast mother and her boy went toward the desert. As she was a native of Egypt, she may have thought she could reach that country, and live among her own people. She had not travelled many miles before she came to a wild part of the country. What could she now do? She had lost her way, and went up and down the desert, and could find no one to guide her. In that part of the world there were no roads or paths, and the way was rough and painful, and

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the heat great. At last they had drunk all the water from the bottle, and they could see no well nor river from which they could again fill it. Ishmael was now weary with walking, and faint from thirst and the heat of the sun. He could not go on any further. How sad was the state of the poor mother and her boy! In her distress she cried, "Let me not see the death of the child." So she laid him under a tree or bush, and "sat down over against him a good way off." She could not help him, but would not leave him to perish alone. Ishmael must now have known how foolish and wicked his conduct had been. He knew that he had brought himself and his mother into all this affliction, and he must have wished that they were once again in Abraham's tent. Sin will always bring us into trouble.

As the lad lay weeping and moaning, a voice was heard. Where could it come from? Could she be mistaken in the sound? No; in the stillness of the solitude an angel spoke to her. He had been sent by God to comfort her in her distress. "Fear not," said he, "for God hath

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heard the voice of the lad where he is." And "God opened her eyes," so that she saw a well not far off from where she sat. With new strength she rose from the ground, and with joy ran with her bottle to the well. Do not we think we see her, as soon as it is filled, hastening to her son, and before she tastes a drop herself, pressing it to his lips? See how she bathes his forehead with some of the cooling water, and, as she finds him revive, how gently she raises him in her arms and kisses him.

When they were revived, they again filled their bottle for their journey, and went on their way. From that time "God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer."

There is no further account of the early days of Isaac and Ishmael in the Bible. We may hope that Isaac, under such pious parents as Abraham and Sarah, grew up in the love and fear of God; and that Ishmael did not forget the holy example and prayers which he had seen and heard when living in the tent of his father. There are two

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lessons to be learned from this account of the two brothers.

1. God can see us in every place. His eye is as much upon us in a desert as when we are sitting by our own fireside. When we are brought into trouble by our own folly and sin, we may still pray unto God. Wherever we are, his ear will listen to our prayers, and his hand be ready to afford his gracious help.

2. God is displeased with those children who vex and mock their brothers and sisters. If there be an ill-behaved child in a family, he makes others unhappy besides himself. We should all try to live together in love and peace; and elder children should set a good example to the younger. The way for a family to be happy, is to love God and to be kind one to another.

The God of heaven is pleased to see
A little family agree;
And will not slight the praise they bring,
When loving children join to sing.

For love and kindness please him more
Than if we gave him all our store;

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And children here who dwell in love,
Are like his happy ones above.

The gentle child who tries to please,
That hates to quarrel, fret, and tease,
And would not say an angry word,
That child is pleasing to the Lord.

O God, forgive whenever we
Forget thy will and disagree ;
And grant that each of us may find
The sweet delight of being kind.



Moses.

EXODUS ii. 1—10.

EGYPT is a country often named in the Bible. It is a very long valley, through which runs a

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famous river called the Nile. During a part of the year the country is dry, like a desert; but in the month of July the waters in the river rise and spread over the land, which then looks like a red, muddy sea. When the waters again withdraw, the ground is very fruitful, and large fields of wheat are soon seen growing on every side. The people of this land are of a dark brown colour, and they were formerly known for their wisdom and skill. The kings of this land were called Pharaoh. In the days when the people of Israel lived in this land, there was a king of this name who was severe and cruel in his conduct towards them, who treated them as slaves, and set them to make bricks. He hoped in this way to destroy the people; but, the more he oppressed them, the more they grew in number.

The king, finding that this plan did not succeed, ordered the nurses who took care of the infants to kill all the little boys as soon as they were born. At this time there lived a pious man and wife; they had a young daughter, named Miriam, or Mary; and also a son, Aaron, about

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three years old. When another child was given to them by God, it was a very lovely boy. As they looked upon him, their hearts felt all the joy of parents. But can it be that their dear child shall be taken from them, and killed as the king had ordered? For some time they tried to conceal him in their house; but when a few months passed away they could not but fear that his cries or cheerful voice would be heard. And how could they bear the thought to see him torn from their arms, and killed as other infants had been?

What could they do in their distress? Was there any help for them? Yes; there was help for them in God. He could take care of their child; and to him they resolved to commit their dear babe. Their plan was soon formed, and they prepared to carry it out. On the banks of the river Nile there grew a plant called the papyrus, from which a kind of paper was made. The parents got some of this plant, and made of it a little ark, or boat, just large enough to hold their child. May we not suppose that as they plaited this cradle-boat, they often lifted up their

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hearts in prayer? And how many tears must have fallen from their eyes as they looked upon their baby-boy, and thought that the time was come when they must leave him, and perhaps see him no more! But we are told in the Bible that they had *faith*; they believed that God, who had put it into their hearts to make the ark, would use it to save their child. They did not know in what way he would be saved, but they were sure God would do it in some way.

The ark was at last made, and covered with a kind of pitch, so as to keep out the water. When the babe was laid in his strange cradle, how the whole family must have stood around; and, before the ark was taken away, what sweet loving kisses must Miriam and Aaron have given to their little brother! And no doubt the parents wept, and cried to God that he would keep their dear babe alive. The mother took it to the great river, and, with her kiss, her blessing, and her prayers, she laid the child among the flags, or tall reeds, "by the river's brink." In this river are many reptiles called crocodiles, large, strong, and fierce. Their

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bodies are covered with a hard and scaly coating, and their mouths are filled with sharp teeth; and the people of the land were much alarmed at these creatures. But the babe slept in his little ark, and knew nothing of danger. There, safely under the eye of God, he rested; no fierce creature of the land or of the water could come nigh to hurt it.

When the mother had gone away, the sister Miriam stood near the spot, and watched to see what would happen. She may have been placed there by her mother, or her own love may have led her to follow, that she might know what became of her infant brother, whom she had so often nursed. Perhaps the mother, also, was not far off, at a place they had fixed on.

After a short time, a princess and her maids were seen coming to the spot. The hand of God brought them there, though they did not know it. This lady was the daughter of the king of the country. As she passed down the river's side, she saw the ark among the flags. One of the maids was told to draw it from the water, and bring it to

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her; and when the cover was taken off, there lay the lovely babe. They looked at it, and "the babe wept." He saw that they were strange faces, and not those of his own dear mother and sister. God touched the heart of the princess with tender feelings, and the helpless state and tears of the babe excited her pity. She knew it was one of the infants of the Hebrews, or Jews, who had been placed there to avoid its being killed by her father's order.

How Miriam's heart must have beat with hope and fear, as the princess looked upon her little brother! She slowly came from her hiding-place, to learn what would be done with him. As the princess spoke so kindly about the child, Miriam drew closer to the spot, and meekly said, "Shall I go and call thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?" "Go," said the daughter of the king, not knowing that she was speaking to the sister of the babe. The mother was soon brought to the place, when it was said to her, "Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." Again

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the mother held her dear infant in her arms. She hastened to her home, and told her family how God had heard their prayers, and saved their child.

As the princess had now taken the infant under her care, the king would spare it for her sake. The child was not now looked upon as the son of a Hebrew slave, but as a young prince who might come to sit on a throne. To mark the striking event, the princess called the child Moses, "Because," she said, "I drew him out of the water." The name is taken from a Hebrew word, which means "to draw out."

From that time Moses was as one of the royal family. He was taught in all the learning of the people among whom he dwelt, and was "mighty in words and deeds." Did he then quite forget the God of his fathers? No; when he was "come to years," he gave up all the riches and pleasures of the court of Egypt, that he might share the sorrows of the children of Israel.

Moses lived to be one hundred and twenty years old. His life was useful and honourable.

MOSES.

His history, as given in the Bible, contains much to instruct all who read it. The apostle says, that he esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward," Heb. xi. 26. From the account of his childhood we learn this lesson: God can raise up friends for little children in times of danger and distress. He is the great and gracious Father of all. If he takes care of all things that have life, will he not take more care of those whom he has made to live for ever? "Ye are of more value than many sparrows," Luke xii. 7. The young can know, trust, and love God. They can praise him as the angels do in heaven. Believing in Christ, they may be like him, and, through his merits, they may dwell with him for ever. Will not God, then, watch over the young who love him? And if he is so good to them, should they not, with Moses, choose his service, and live to his glory?

Come, serve the Lord betimes, and choose
The paths of peace and truth;
This earth affords no lovelier sight
Than a religious youth

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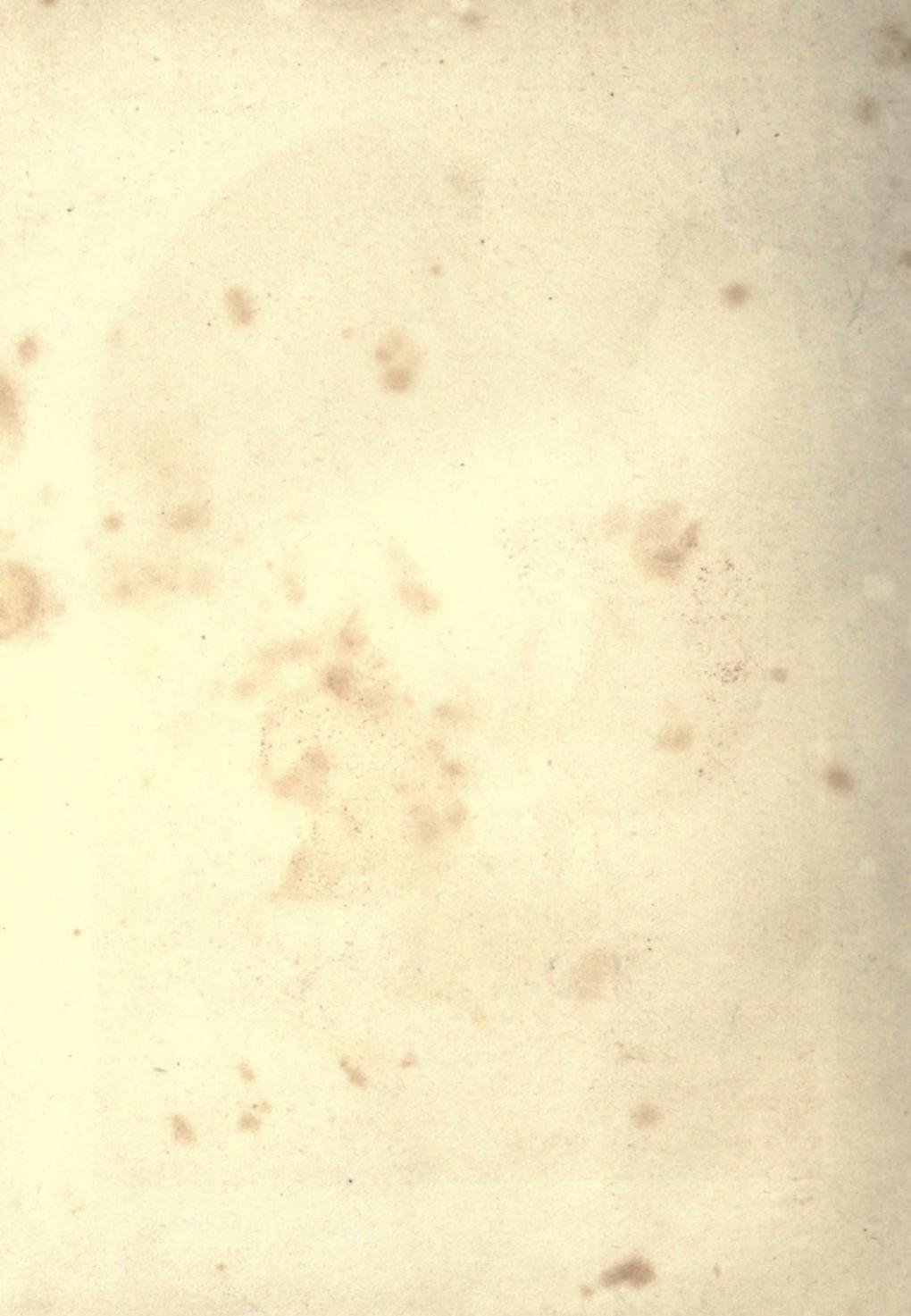
Samuel.

1 SAMUEL i., ii., iii

IN the early times, when the people of Israel dwelt in their own land, judges, prophets, and high priests ruled instead of kings and princes. One of these high priests was Eli, a man who loved the Lord, though he did not watch over his wicked sons as he should have done.

Eli lived near the tabernacle, or, as it was then called, the temple. This temple was a large place, perhaps made of boards, with beautiful curtains inside, where the worship of God was carried on. In it were the holy place and the





SAMUEL.

ark, the altar of brass, and the golden lamp, and many other sacred things.

One day there came to the temple a good woman named Hannah, with Samuel, her little child. She had often been to this place before. Once when she came there she had prayed to the Lord to give her a son. And now she had brought this son with her, to offer him to the Lord, that he might be his servant in the temple. She had given to him the name of Samuel, which word means "asked of the Lord." Hannah had made a vow, or promise, that if she had a son he should be given to the service of the temple.

The child was young, perhaps only three years old, when he first stood before Eli. "For this child I prayed," she said; "and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him; therefore also I have lent," or returned, "him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord." Then little Samuel began to "worship the Lord there;" this may mean that he said a little prayer suited to his age. We may suppose that the mother fondly kissed her dear child

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before she left him in the temple, and then went to her happy home.

Samuel now wore a linen ephod. The ephod was a part of the dress of a priest. It was a robe which hung down in front, and over the back. It was fastened, by buckles set with jewels, on the shoulders, and round the body by a girdle or sash. These buckles were often made of gold, and were set with sparkling jewels.

Every year Hannah made a little coat, and when she went up to the house of God, she took it to Samuel.

Jewish mothers used to employ some of their time at home in weaving wool and flax into cloth. We have this custom noticed in the thirty-first chapter of Proverbs, ver. 13. They sat at the doors of their houses, and as they turned the distaff, or little machine for spinning, they sang some of the songs of Zion. We may suppose that Hannah spent many happy hours weaving the coat for her little boy, and longed for the time when she might take it to him, and again give him a mother's kiss. It may have

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been of fine linen: if so, it was made of flax; or of the purest white wool, which kind was much worn by the Jews; or it may have been of many colours, like that given to Joseph by his father Jacob. But whichever it was, it no doubt was a source of joy to both mother and child. We think we see the delight of little Samuel whenever he saw his mother, and received from her hand his new coat. Some children would have become proud or vain if they had been dressed as Samuel was; but we do not think he was vain of his robe, or of his early service in the temple. He was an obedient and pious child, for it is said of him, he was "in favour both with the Lord and with man."

One night, when Samuel was about twelve years old, he had lain down to sleep in his little room or tent, near to where Eli slept. Just at the dawn of the day, before the light which burned all night in the golden lamp was put out, Samuel heard a voice calling his name. He thought that Eli wanted him, and, like a good child, he ran to the aged priest and said. "Here am I, for

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thou calledst me." Eli said, "I called not; lie down again." It was not long before he again heard the voice, saying, "Samuel, Samuel." He was now sure it was Eli, and he quickly went to his bedside, and said that he had indeed heard him call. "I called not, my son," was the reply; "lie down again."

It was the voice of God that spoke, though as yet Samuel did not know it. A third time the voice called as before, and the boy again hastened to his master. Eli now saw that it was the Lord who had spoken. "Go," said he, "lie down; and it shall be, if he shall call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." So Samuel went, and lay down in his place.

For the fourth time the voice cried, "Samuel, Samuel." The lad now spoke as he had been taught. Then the voice gave him this message to the aged Eli, that the Lord would punish the people of Israel for their sins, and that his two sons should both die in one day, because they were very wicked. He was also to declare that the Lord was angry with Eli for not doing all he should have done to keep his sons from their evil conduct.

When the morning came, Samuel began to attend to his duties in the temple. He was afraid to tell Eli the sad things that would come upon his family and people. While he was there, Eli called him, and asked what the Lord had said, and desired that he would not conceal any word from him. When Eli heard what would come to pass, he piously said : "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth good." Soon after this time the sons were killed in battle; and when their aged father was told they were dead, and that the ark of God was taken, he fell down from his seat, and died also.

Samuel from this time grew up to be the prophet and ruler of his people; and, after a useful and holy life, he died at a very old age.

1. No voice is now heard such as came to Samuel in the temple; yet God speaks to the young by the voice of pious parents, by teachers and ministers, by his word, and his Holy Spirit in their hearts. Young reader, he has spoken many times to *you*.

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“ Oh, then, whene’er his call is heard,
Do you, like Samuel, say,
‘ Speak, Lord ; thy servant hears thy word,
And gladly will obey.’ ”

2. Ask for grace that you may devote yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ. He invites the young to give their hearts to him. Why do they not attend to him ? Because they do not know how much he loves them. They do not feel how much they need him as a Saviour. They do not think how greatly he can bless them, and do them good.

3. If the young would be useful when they grow up, they should try to be useful when they are young. They are not called to do the work which Samuel did in the temple ; but there are many ways in which they can serve God and do good in the world.

“ What bless’d examples do I find,
Writ in the word of truth,
Of children who began to mind
Religion in their youth.

“ Samuel the child was wean’d and brought
To wait upon the Lord ;
Young Timothy betimes was taught
To know his holy word

ABIJAH.

“ Then why should I so long delay
What others learn’d so soon ?
May I not pass another day
Without this work begun ”



Abijah.

1 KINGS xiv. 1—5, 12, 13.

ABIJAH was the eldest son of Jeroboam, king of Israel. When a child, he fell very ill. The queen, his mother, went to a prophet of the Lord, that she might inquire if he would get well. She did not wish to go as a queen, for she feared the

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prophet would not give her the answer she wanted if he knew who she was, for the king her husband had led the people into the worship of idols. So she changed her clothes, and went as if she were only a common person. Did she not know that the prophet would be guided by the Spirit of the Lord in what he should say to her?

As was usual in those times, when going on a visit, she took with her a present of cakes, bread, and honey. It was a mark of respect to offer a gift. When Saul went to inquire of Samuel about his father's asses, he took a small piece of money as a present. The queen of Sheba, on her journey to Jerusalem, took with her "camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones," as her gift to king Solomon. When the wise men came from the east to see the infant Jesus, they brought with them an offering of incense, gold, and sweet myrrh. This custom is still observed in eastern lands. Even poor people, when on a visit, take with them a flower, or a bunch of grapes, or a pot of honey, or some other small article. As the mother of Abijah wished to





ABIJAH.

appear as a poor woman, she took to the prophet a poor person's gift.

The prophet to whom she went was aged and blind; but as soon as the queen went into his house, he told her that she could not deceive him, and that she was the wife of the king of the land. Then he made known to her the sad news that her son would die, and that her family would come to an end, because of the sins of her husband. But it was also declared, that the child should die in peace; for there was found in his heart "some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel." The queen went to her home very sad in spirit, and as she entered into the gate of the palace, her son died.

This is a short account, but it may teach this lesson: that piety in the heart of a child is the best thing that can be there. Early religion is always pleasing to God. He looks upon it with delight, whether it be in the heart of a young prince, or of a poor cottage child. He still says, "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me."

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Though no pious parents' care
Young Abijah e'er had known,
God had heard his early prayer,
And had mark'd him for his own.

Happy child, by God approv'd,
Early taken to his rest;
From the abode of sin remov'd,
To the mansions of the blest.

Is there in this heart of mine
One such hopeful sign of grace ?
Does my soul to God incline ?
Do I daily seek his face ?



THE WIDOW'S SON.



The Widow's Son.

1 KINGS xvii.

AHAB was a wicked king of Israel. He forsook the service of the true God, and built a temple to his idol in the city of Samaria, and set up another image in a grove of trees. There is a fearful character given of him in the Bible. It is said, "He did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him."

One day an aged man stood before king Ahab; his dress was a coarse garment, called sackcloth, perhaps made of the hair of camels. The look of the old man was grave and sorrowful. He had

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to deliver a message from God to the king, and to declare that the whole people of Israel were soon to be punished for their sin. When the king and his nobles looked on him, they knew that it was the prophet Elijah.

The prophet did not fear the angry looks of Ahab, but spoke boldly thus: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." No rain for years! Then in that hot country, the fields, and trees, and every green thing would wither, and there would be no food for man, and the cattle would die of thirst.

God then spake to Elijah, and directed him to go to a solitary place where a brook of water ran, and where he would cause the ravens to feed him. The prophet went as he was told, and in this lonely spot he spent about a year, drinking of the brook, and supplied with food by birds of the air. Though no human being was near him, he was happy, for God was with him, and he knew he was safe under his care.

Months passed away, and no rain nor dew had

THE WIDOW'S SON.

fallen on the earth. The brook became more and more narrow. The grass and rushes which grew on its banks had quite withered. The pebbles and roots which had been washed by the stream were left dry; and the branches of the trees were scorched and bare. The brook now ceased to flow: there may have been a little water in the hollows, but at last all was dried up. The Lord could have given water to Elijah by miracle, but he was pleased to tell him to depart, saying, "Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee." God did not send him to any of the widows of Israel, but to a poor woman in a heathen part of the land. He at once obeyed, for he knew there are wise and good reasons for all God does.

It was a long journey through the whole of the land to Zarephath. The prophet must have been tired when he came near to the place, and needed rest and food. As he drew towards the gate of the city he saw a poor widow gathering sticks. God in some way let him know that she was to

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give him food during the remainder of the days of famine. He then asked her for some water; and as she turned away to obtain it, he directed her also to give him a morsel of bread. This seemed out of her power. She replied, "As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse; and behold I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die." Elijah must have looked upon her with pity; but he told her to fear not, and to go and prepare first a cake for him, and then make for herself and her son. But how could she take the last morsel from her hungry child, and give it to a stranger? It was because the woman saw that he was a holy man and a prophet, and she had faith that the God of Israel would provide for her. The bread was soon made in thin cakes, and given to Elijah; and from that day a blessing came upon her, and she, her son, and the prophet, were supplied by miracle.

One day the little son of the widow was taken ill, and died. Has the young reader seen a dear

THE WIDOW'S SON.

child lie cold and pale, and in a coffin? Was it your infant brother or sister? Did you not grieve and weep at the loss of one you loved? If so, you can understand how the widow felt when she saw the lifeless body of her only child. Her husband was dead, and now her child. Her last comfort and companion must be laid by his side in the grave.

As the widow was weeping, she looked up and saw Elijah. In her agony, she at first thought that the prophet might have prayed to God to send this loss, to punish her for sin. "Give me thy son," said the pious Elijah. And he took the body, carried it to his own chamber, and laid it upon the bed. After he had prayed to God, he stretched himself three times upon the body, and the soul of the child returned to it. What a sight that must have been, when the prophet took the boy in his arms, and carried him to his weeping mother! He now breathed again, his eyes were full of life, and with joy the widow again embraced her child.

We must all die, as the widow's son did. But

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there will be no prophet Elijah to bring us back to this life. We must be laid in the grave, and the home that once knew us will know us no more for ever, and the friends that weep over our bodies must see them carried from their sight. Where will our souls then be? They do not die; they are not placed in the grave with the body. They must depart to heaven or to hell; for so the word of God teaches. Do you not wish to go to heaven? Surely you do. Then you must be sorry for your sins; your hearts must be given to Christ, and your lives be spent in the fear and love of God. If such is your happy case, at the great day when the dead shall be raised, a glorious and lovely body shall be given you. You shall then die no more, but be for ever happy with the Lord.



THE LITTLE CAPTIVE MAID.



The Little Captive Maid.

2 KINGS v. 1—14.

THERE lived in Syria a captain named Naaman. He was in great favour with his king, because he had fought many battles, and saved his country. But, in the midst of all his honours, God smote him with a disease called the leprosy. This was a very sad affliction: the hair fell from the head, the nails from the hands; sores covered the body, and all strength and ease were taken away. No one could give Naaman relief; all his own money, and all the power of the king, could not cure him.

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It was a sad grief to him to think that he never should be well again.

Among his servants was a little girl, who, during the wars of Israel, had been carried away from her home. She was now a poor slave, far from her parents and those she loved. As the little captive looked on her master, she wished that he might again enjoy his health, and be free from all that he suffered. One day when waiting on her mistress, she said how much she wished her master would go to the prophet in Israel, who could cure him of his leprosy. This prophet was Elisha; and we may suppose that she had known of the great cures he had wrought, and she thought he was so kind, that if her master went to him, he would be sure to return home quite well.

When the master was told of the words of the young slave girl, he believed them, and went to Elisha, and returned to his house quite well.

In the conduct of the little captive maid, we notice these good marks:—

1. She was a *modest* little girl. This is seen in the manner she gave advice: it was in the form



THE LITTLE CAPTIVE MAID.

of a wish. She did not boldly go up to her master, and tell him what he should do. "She said unto her mistress;" and this was quite right to speak first to her. The young should be modest and gentle in their ways. If they boldly offer their advice, it is not likely to receive attention. Jesus says, "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart."

2. She was a *benevolent* child. Stolen from her dear parents, she was now a poor slave. Yet, instead of anger against her master, she felt only love and kindness. If, like some children, she had been sullen and unforgiving, Naaman would not have been cured of his disease. Let us learn to return good for evil.

3. She was a *truth-telling* little maid, or her master would not have left his home, and taken with him gold, silver, and garments, and have gone a journey of one hundred miles, merely upon her word. If he had known that she told lies, he would not have gone to this trouble, and expense. He would probably have said, "Why should I attend to what that slave girl says, whom

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I have so often found speaking falsely? No, I cannot believe her words." But he did credit what she said; and thus showed he knew that at all times she loved to speak the truth. What a lesson is here for young and old!

4. She was a *useful* girl. When all the physicians in Syria could not restore her master, she told him how he might be healed. She was of more value to him than all his bags of gold and silver, and all the favour of the king. A very young Christian may tell the most important of all truths to a sinner,—that Jesus is the only Saviour, and that all who believe in him will be saved.

5. It may be hoped that she was a *pious* child. She had not forgotten the prophet who had power to heal. If we were carried away into a land of idols, how would it be with us? Should we be able and willing to direct any one of the heathen to a greater Prophet than Elisha, and tell of His precious blood, which alone can take away the leprosy of sin?

THE CHILD RAISED TO LIFE AT SHUNEM.



The Child that was raised to life again at Shunem.

2 KINGS iv. 8—37.

IN the days of Elisha, there lived in the city of Shunem a kind and pious woman. When the prophet went from place to place to teach the people, he used to stop at her house, and was always received with great kindness. A room was made in her house for him to sleep in, and she placed in it "a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick." This kind woman had no child, but Elisha told her, from God, that she should be the mother of a little boy. And so it was,—she was blessed with a child she dearly loved.

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One bright and beautiful day in the summer, when the child was able to run about, the father and his men were reaping the corn in the fields. It was a happy season in that land: the people sang aloud for joy. The little child was full of health and gladness. He thought he would go into the fields, and see his father and the men at work. So he ran to them; but when he got to the fields he cried, "My head! my head!" Perhaps he ran too fast, as some children will do; or the burning rays of the sun may have struck his head, which is sometimes the case in a hot country, and which is called a "sun-stroke."

The father saw that his little boy was ill, and he said to a lad, "Carry him home to his mother." And when he was brought to his mother, he lay on her lap till noon, and then died.

The heart of the mother was full of grief, yet she had some hope. She thought of Elisha, and she had faith that he could help her in the time of her trouble. So she laid the dead body on the bed of the prophet, shut the door of the room, and then went out. How quickly did she

THE CHILD RAISED TO LIFE AT SHUNEM.

hasten along the road,—now thinking of her poor dead child, and then hoping that she might find the prophet at home! At length she came to his house, and stood before the man of God. She told him of her loss and distress. He did not delay to give her hope. He first sent his servant, and then went himself to the house of the afflicted mother. When he got there, he laid his body on the dead child. He knew, though he could do nothing, that God could do everything He pleased, and that he would hear the prayer of his servant. The prophet now cried unto the Lord, and the soul of the child came back to the body. Then he bade his servant call the mother, who was standing without; and when she saw that her son was alive again, she fell at Elisha's feet, and "bowed herself to the ground." With what delight did she take her little boy in her arms, and kiss him, and carry him to his father! There was great joy in all the house on that day. Once more the child could see the flowers and the fields, and hear the song of the birds, and listen to the pious teachings of the good prophet. We

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may hope that the life which was thus restored, was spent in the fear and service of God.

This story will show:—

1. That children may die. We often see the young cut down by death, as the grass of the field is cut down by the mower in the summer time.

2. That children may die suddenly. Just as the little boy who ran to see the reapers, they may be quite well in the morning, and before night they may sicken and die.

3. That children should be prepared to die. They will not die any the sooner for being ready. To be prepared is to love God, to believe in Jesus, and to seek to do his will. Then, life will be a blessing while it lasts, and at death they will go to heaven.

Heavenly Father, grant that I
May the name of Jesus love ;
That, whenever I shall die,
I may dwell with him above.

JOASHI



Joash.

2 KINGS xi. 1—16.

AHAZIAH died when he had been king of Israel only for one year, and when he was a young man. He left behind him several little children. His mother, Athaliah, was a cruel woman, and wished to be queen. Instead of loving the young orphans, she hired some men to kill them all. When the men went to commit this murder, their aunt, who was wife to the high priest, took up an infant, named Joash, and ran with him into her bed-room. After a little time, she hid him in one of the chambers of the temple, and there he lived for six years, under the kind care of this

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good aunt. She brought him up in the fear of the Lord, and loved him as her own son. No one was allowed to go into the part of the temple where the infant was hidden, except the priests, so that he was easily concealed there.

The wicked grandmother now thought that all the young princes were dead, and that she might rule as queen without any fear. She set up some idols, and made the people worship before them. Still there were some left who feared God, and who hoped for the time when his holy service would again be carried on in the temple. Among these was the high priest, the uncle of young Joash.

God sometimes allows people to follow out their own sinful plans, but then brings some good even out of them. His eyes are upon the wicked as well as upon the righteous. He was watching over the queen, who now thought she was safe upon the throne ; and he was mindful of the young orphan, who was piously taught in the temple by his uncle, that he might be the better king when he grew up.





JOASH.

When Joash was seven years old, the good high priest thought he would try to raise him to his rightful throne. One sabbath-day, when a greater number of priests were in the temple than usual, he armed them with the swords and spears which had been put there by king David. He then brought out the little prince, and placed a crown on his head, when the priests and people cried aloud, "God save the king."

The queen, as she sat in her palace, heard the shouts of joy, and hastened to the temple to learn the cause, when the high priest ordered her to be seized, carried out of the temple, and slain.

Joash now became a youthful king. He was guided by his pious uncle in the way in which he should go. As he grew older, he was sorry to see how broken and injured the temple was, and he directed that it should be repaired. He did not forget that he had been there nursed, and taught, and kept from the hands of his cruel grandmother. By his order, a chest, or large box, was placed at the doors of the temple, in which people might place their money; and as

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they began to feel the pleasure of serving God, they gave cheerfully. When the box was full, the repairs were begun, and in a short time the house of God was restored to its former beauty. We may suppose that here young Joash often sang some of the holy songs which king David wrote about it. With him he might say, "How amiable" or lovely "are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! A day in thy courts is better than a thousand."

Thus Joash reigned as a good king for some years; but did he ever forget the lessons and good example of his pious uncle and aunt? Yes, indeed he did. When his uncle died, the youthful king was drawn into idolatry. He then wrought many wicked deeds, and, among others, he killed his own cousin Zechariah, the son of the high priest. This holy man warned him of his sins and the anger of God; but instead of listening to him, he called on the people to throw him down a flight of steps, and cast stones at him till he died. When anger is in the heart, love and gratitude to our friends, and the fear of God, are all forgotten. As Zechariah was dying, he declared that God

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would punish them for their evil deeds. The king must have soon thought of his words ; for before that year was over, an army of the Syrians came and wasted his country. Then Joash was alarmed, and took all the money he had, and all he could find in the temple, and the gold and silver vessels used in the service of God, and gave them to the king of Syria that he might go away. He went, but soon came again, and there was great misery in all the land. Joash was now taken ill ; and as he lay in his chamber, he must have felt very unhappy. He knew that he had forsaken the God of his youth, and now God had forsaken him. His own servants did not love him ; and at last they killed him as he lay in his bed. They did not bury him as they usually buried the kings of the land ; but he was put into a common grave, and his memory was held in dishonour.

As we read the history of Joash, we may plainly see—

1. That sin is the worst thing in the world. It brings sorrow into kingdoms, into families, and into every heart. It robs men of peace of mind

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and health of body, and, if not repented of, it will keep the soul out of heaven. The Bible teaches us to flee from it as from the face of a serpent.

2. That the young who have been piously trained, should take care not to forsake the good way. When the uncle and aunt of Joash no longer watched over him, then he showed he did not truly love God. Youthful reader, your pious friends will be taken away from you; what will then be your conduct? Will you forget all they said to you, or will you think of their kind advice, and seek to follow it? Ask the Lord so to put his fear in your heart, that you may not depart from his ways. Remember what a bright and happy beginning there was to the reign of the young Joash, and what a dark and disgraceful close.

Oh, let me serve thee all my days,
May love and zeal with years increase;
For pleasant, Lord, are all thy ways,
And all religion's paths are peace.





Josiah.

2 KINGS xxii, xxiii.; 2 CHRON. xxxiv

JOSIAH became king of Judah when he was only eight years old. His grandfather Manasseh, and his father Amon, had forsaken the worship of the true God. Nearly all the priests had become evil, and served at the altars of idols; and the people also were wicked and corrupt.

We may picture to ourselves the young king Josiah. His dress was of a fine linen, of a purple colour; for silk was not in use among the Jews in those days. On his head was a broad stout band, called a diadem. This was a kind of crown, shining with gold and costly pearls. There were

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also pearls and gems around his neck and arms. In this splendid dress he sat on a high throne, perhaps the one made by Solomon, which was wholly of gold and ivory. In his right hand he held a sceptre, or staff, overlaid with gold, as a sign of his kingly power. His house was a beautiful palace, which had lovely gardens, and groves, and fountains of water. Every day the choicest food was spread upon his table. When he rode abroad it was in a fine chariot, drawn by horses, which were then scarce, and only used by royal persons. If he went a long journey, servants ran before him to tell the people that he was coming. The greatest persons in the land came out to meet him, and bowed to the ground when they came nigh to him. Guards and other servants waited on him at all times, ready to attend to his will. Now, though all this is not told us in the Bible about Josiah, we know that thus kings were honoured in the east, and we may well suppose that the youthful prince thus began his reign.

There was no greater person in the kingdom than Josiah. He could do what he pleased, and

JOSIAH.

there was no one to call him to an account. How was it, then, that he did not live a wicked life like his father? It was because "his heart was tender, and he humbled himself before God." He also had a pious friend in Hilkiah, the high priest, who led him in the ways of the Lord.

In the twelfth year of his reign, he sent men through the land to break down the altars and images of the false gods. And as the temple of the true God had fallen into decay, he had it repaired, and gave much money for this purpose. He made a great feast when the temple was again built up, and offered a present of forty thousand lambs and kids for sacrifice, besides oxen and calves. While they were cleansing the temple, a copy of the law of God was found, which he caused to be read to all the people. In these ways he showed his deep concern for the honour and worship of God; and he was made a great blessing in his own day, and a bright example for every following age. Josiah was slain in battle, though he died in peace with God.

Although our young readers are not kings or

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queens, there is much in the conduct of Josiah which deserves their notice. Though they have not his royal *state*, they should have his pious *spirit*. To enable them to know what that spirit was, they may observe these four things:—

1. In Josiah is seen the piety of a *youth*: “While he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David, his father.” The Lord claims the first and best of all we have and all we are; and he has a right to all.

The firstling of the flock was given
By Israel to the God of heaven ;
So may we yield to him the prime
Of our first love and youthful time.

2. In Josiah we see the piety of an *orphan*. God has said that all fatherless and motherless children may have him for a Father. If you are an orphan, will you not then say, “My Father, thou art the guide of my youth”?

3. Josiah showed his love to the word of God. What should we be if the Bible were lost, and not a copy to be had? Should we show the same love and zeal for the holy book as the young king

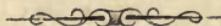
JOSIAH.

did, if, after it had been lost for some years, it were put again into our hands? You should praise God that you have the Bible, and pray that his Holy Spirit may impress your hearts with the truths it contains, so that you may become "wise unto salvation."

4. Seek to have a humble and tender heart, like Josiah. The heart of every child, without the grace of God, is like a stone—it is hard, cold, heavy, and barren; but when it is converted or renewed, it is called "a heart of flesh"—it is gentle, tender, full of love, faith, and holy desires. If you ask God to give you this "new heart," he will grant your desire.

Grant me, O Lord, in early youth
To love the sacred word of truth;
That greatest, best of gifts impart,
A mind renew'd, a gracious heart.

Thus living in thy constant fear,
Oh, let me prove a blessing here;
Serve thee with faith, till call'd to die,
Then praise thee in the realms on high.



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Little Children brought to Jesus.

MARK x. 13—16

WHEN our Lord Jesus Christ was on the earth, he was once displeased. It was not because they called him evil names ; it was not that they charged him with having an evil spirit ; it was not when they took up stones to kill him, and when they cast him out of the city ; nor was it when they mocked and scourged him, nor when they nailed him to the cross, and derided him in his pain. He bore all this with meekness, like a lamb. But when he saw that some of his disciples would have kept little children from coming to him, he was "*much* displeased." Why did the





LITTLE CHILDREN BROUGHT TO JESUS.

disciples wish to keep them back? Why did they stand in the way, and forbid them from going to their Master? (See our picture.) Had they not often seen how kind and loving he was even to the weakest and the poorest? Surely they must before this have seen his tender regard to the young. But while the disciples would have kept the children away, Jesus looked upon their young faces; he told the mothers and friends to bring the children to him, and, as he looked upon them, he showed how much he loved them. He took them up and blessed them, saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."

Have you not read those pleasing lines which begin—

"I think when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus dwelt here among men,
And call'd little children like lambs to his fold,
I should like to have been with them then.

"I wish that his hands had been put on my head,
And that I had been placed on his knee,
And that I might have seen his kind look when he said,
'Let the little ones come unto me.'"

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You think if Jesus were now on earth it would be easy to go to him. You would ask your parents to take you to him. But you can approach him now he is in heaven, more easily than you could do if he were on earth. How could children who live in England get to Jesus at Jerusalem? How could the little Hindoos or Africans reach him? or the young in China, or the South Seas? Thousands of miles by land and by water would have to be passed, before you or they could get to him. And then how could the poor obtain the money, or find the time, that would be needful? Yes, it is better that Jesus is in heaven; and we can all draw nigh to him, from all parts of the world, at one time; and we are sure that the same love which led him to receive little children many years ago, will lead him to bless them now. Jesus still says to the young, "Come unto me." You may address him now in prayer. When you kneel, morning or evening, if your lips utter the sincere desires of your heart, you will be attending to his invitation. His holy word is like a letter to you: when you read it attentively, or receive it in faith

JOASH.

when it is explained by his ministers; this also is coming to Christ.

There is everything in Jesus to win your heart. He is meek, lowly, and full of love. He can do you all the good you need, and save you from all the evil you fear. If you are a poor child, he can make you rich with the best riches, for he can give you his grace. If you are an ignorant child, he can give you his Holy Spirit to teach you. If you are an orphan child, he can be better to you than father or mother, and all earthly friends. If you are an afflicted child, he can comfort and bless you. But one thing is certain, you are a sinful child, and if you wish to be saved, you must go to Jesus. He will save you from the love and power of sin, and from its guilt and punishment. He obeyed his Father's law, and died on the cross, that he might save all who believe on him. He is a kind friend, a rich friend, a powerful friend, an ever-living friend. He is so kind, he *will* give you everything you need. He is so rich, that he *can* give it you. He is so strong, that he can protect you from all your foes. He never dies,

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and his friendship can never end. Go then to Jesus; he will make you happy while you live, happy when you die, and happy for ever.



The Ruler's Daughter.

LUKE viii 41—56.

JESUS is the good physician: he cured all kinds of diseases without delay, without money, and without pain. The blind were made to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, and the dead were raised to life

THE RULER'S DAUGHTER.

again. Among those who died, and had their lives restored, was a little girl about twelve years old.

Jesus was sitting in the house of Levi, or Matthew, when there came to him a person named Jairus. He was one of the chief people in the town where he lived; he was also a ruler, whose duty it was to take care of the synagogue, or house in which the Jews met to read the Scriptures and pray to God. His little daughter lay at the point of death. As he had heard of the wonders done by Jesus, he thought he might also obtain help for his child, now she was likely to die in the days of her youth.

We may suppose we see him, asking his way to the house where Jesus was, and as he goes along, perhaps saying to himself, "I have heard of the great and strange things he has done; I will try what he can do for me. Surely he will not slight the case of my dear child; for they say he is ready to relieve all who apply to him."

When Jairus came to the house, he saw Jesus teaching the people, for Jesus was always "doing

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good." He quickly went towards him, threw himself at his feet, and told him of the case of his youthful daughter. Jesus listened to his sad tale, and his heart felt a tender pity for the parent and the child. He was at once moved to help them ; for, when did he ever refuse to relieve the afflicted and distressed ? He could have spoken a word, and she would have been made well, though he did not go to her ; but he arose up and went out ; for another miracle was to be worked as he passed along. This was upon a poor woman who had been afflicted for twelve years. How Jairus must have rejoiced when he saw the cure on the woman ! Now, he would think I am sure he can heal my child, for I have seen a proof of his great power.

But persons were seen hurrying from the ruler's house, who brought the tidings that it was of no further use to "trouble the Master," for the child was dead. Oh ! how the father's heart sank in grief ! But Jesus turned to him, and kindly said, "Be not afraid ; only believe, and she shall be made whole." As though he had said, "Do not

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weep; all shall be made well. I have power over the dead, as well as over the living."

They now all went forward, and as they came near to the ruler's house, they heard the friends weeping within, and the minstrels playing in front of the door. It was the custom in that land to hire women to mourn for the dead, who also played doleful tunes on the tambourine and pipes. Jesus at once went into the house along with three of his disciples, and the parents of the child. He first spoke a word of comfort to the parents: "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth"—meaning, that her death was only like a short sleep. He then took her hand, and bade her arise. The word was no sooner spoken, than the spirit of the child came back to the cold body. The colour of health again glowed on her cheeks, and she arose, as if she had just awoke from a pleasant sleep. The parents embrace their child with joy, and then, as we suppose, fall at the feet of Jesus to thank and adore him for this act of might and mercy; but it was enough that he had made them happy, and he

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soon goes forth to make others happy too by his miracles of love.

In the beautiful account which is given us in the New Testament, we may see,—

1. The *power* of Jesus. He can do more than we can ask or think. The ruler asked him to cure his sick child, and he raised his *dead* child. Jesus can raise our souls from a state of sin; and he will at the last great day bring our bodies from the grave.

2. The *love* of Jesus. “He went about doing good.” He did good every day. It was his delight to do good. Sometimes he taught the people; sometimes he worked miracles. He showed his love to the poor and to the rich; to the young and to the old. His love is still the same; it can never alter.

Oh may his tender, gentle love,
Now draw my heart to things above!
That I among his saints may know,
The joys of heaven begun below.



TIMOTHY.



Timothy.

2 Tim. i. 5 ; iii. 14—17.

TIMOTHY was a disciple and friend of the apostle Paul. A disciple means a learner, a scholar. When Timothy was a young man, he heard the apostle preach, and the Holy Spirit blessed what was then said to the good of his soul. From that time he loved to be with so wise and kind a teacher. Sometimes they went long journeys together, to make known the way in which sinners can be saved, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. There are two epistles,

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or letters, in the New Testament, which were written by the apostle to Timothy. If you read these letters, you will see what good advice he gave to him, and how much he loved him.

After Timothy had been a preacher of the gospel for some years, he went to a city called Ephesus, at a time when the people made a great feast in honour of their idol. When he saw how wicked they were, and how they fell down before the image, he told them that their worship was vain and wicked, and that the true God was angry with them on account of it. As soon as they heard him speak against their god, they shouted and made a noise. Then they laid hold on Timothy, and dragged him along the streets, and at last beat him to death with clubs and stones. We are not told about the death of Timothy in the Bible, or we should be sure it was quite true; but it is so stated by those who wrote the books which contain the early history of the church of Christ.

We place Timothy among the children of the Bible, because it is said of him, "From a child

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thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus," 2 Tim. iii. 15. He had a grandmother named Lois, and a pious mother named Eunice. When very young, they taught him from the word of God. Happy Timothy, to stand by the side of a dear mother, and hear from her lips the great things God had done for his people in every age.

The Jewish children were taught by their parents at home, and were by them often taken to the temple to see the sacrifices offered. No doubt young Timothy had been told by his pious mother how God saved Noah in the ark, and Daniel in the den of lions: how David slew the giant Goliath with a sling and a stone, and how Elijah was fed by ravens in a desert. These, and a hundred other beautiful stories, she told him from the sacred book. Then, too, she taught him that the passover was kept because the angel of God passed over the Hebrews, and slew the Egyptians; and that the lamb was offered every day in the temple as an atonement for sin.

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She must also have told him of the great things God had done for their nation, and that he had promised to send them a Saviour. All this instruction must have been very useful to Timothy when he grew up, and when he became a preacher of the gospel. He must often have praised God for giving him such pious friends to care for him and teach him.

Timothy had not a complete Bible as we have, nor was his book like what we use. It was most probably made of long sheets of parchment, and was rolled upon a short stick. It was not printed, for printing was not then invented, but written with a kind of steel pen. It was too large to put into a pocket, and must have cost a large sum of money. A poor child in those days did not have a copy of the Scriptures which he could call his own. He could not say, "This is my own Bible." But now an English child may have the whole Bible for tenpence, nicely printed and bound, and which may be carried in a little girl's schoolbag, or in a boy's pocket. And there are many teachers and kind friends who are ready to explain

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it, and show its use and value. Observe these things about the Bible,—

1. It should be read. The word Bible means “book,” and Scriptures means “writings.” It is the best of all books and all writings; for it contains the word and will of God. It speaks only truth, and is full of the greatest truths. It has done more good in the world than all other books. Every one has to do with what the Bible makes known. It teaches about God, and man, and this world, and the world to come. Good men, in all ages, have loved it. Many kings, princes, the wise, the rich, the poor, have found it to their souls sweeter than honey, and more precious to them than the finest gold.

2. The Bible should be read by children. It is not for aged persons alone. We have seen that there is much in this holy book *about* the young, and *for* the young; it was put there on purpose to teach them. It is true there are some things in the Bible hard to be understood. Many years ago a pious man said, “It is like a river, so deep in the middle that an elephant may swim in it,

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but along the shore a lamb may wade, and not be drowned." You should be like the lamb. There are truths in the Scripture which the wisest cannot fully understand ; but if we have sincere and prayerful hearts, we may learn all that we need to know. If a child seeks to learn from the Bible, and asks God for his blessing, he will become wise, good, and happy. How sad is it to think that there are people who try to prevent the young from reading the book of God!

3. The Bible can make children, through faith in Christ Jesus, "wise unto salvation." It teaches us many things ; but its *great end* is to lead to the salvation of the soul. It tells us of the love of a Saviour, of what he is, what he has done, and what he has promised to do for those who believe in him. Jesus says, that we should "search the Scriptures," for they testify of Him. You should search with as much zeal as men seek for jewels in a mine. It contains "the pearl of great price." If you would be made wise unto salvation, you must love the truth. You must love it more

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than money, or sleep, or pleasure, or anything else. You should read the Bible often, and read it daily. A wise man once said, "Get a little at a time, and as often as you can, and you will soon know a great deal." It is like a gold mine, where a man may dig every day of his life, and find much gold, and yet there will be plenty left for others. You must also pray to God to teach you. David was a great and pious man, and he prayed thus: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." If David so prayed, surely you should ask of God to help you. You can say, "O Lord, give me thy Holy Spirit, that I may love the Bible, and do what it requires. May I believe with my whole heart what thou hast spoken. And may I so believe, that my soul may be saved, for the sake of Jesus Christ my Lord."

Happy will you be, if you should be like a little boy who learned a verse every day, and when he grew up to be a man, that which he had learned in youth was blessed in leading him to love and serve the Saviour.

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“The Child Jesus.”

LUKE ii. 27.

THE first earthly home of Jesus was the stable of an inn, and his humble cradle was a manger, where the oxen fed. We may suppose there was no one in Bethlehem who offered to give a shelter to the poor mother and her Babe. Though angels in the skies spoke of his coming, and sang his praise, only a few persons on earth knew anything about him, or showed him any respect. Some of these were learned men, led onward by a star from a heathen land, and some were shepherds, who had been watching their flocks in the fields. He had no servants to wait upon him, and no rich clothes

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to wear. There were but few of those comforts for him which other infants enjoy.

As Jesus was lowly in his birth, so he was also as he grew up in life. He lived in a poor home, and was known only as “the carpenter’s son.” As the Son of God, we might have thought a palace would be his dwelling, a queen his mother, and his dress of the most costly clothes. But he saw fit not to come to the earth in such a lofty condition; he chose the most lowly; and thus, from experience, can feel tenderly for children who live in humble homes. He knows how the poorest child feels, and what it suffers, for he was once poor himself.

The New Testament does not tell us much about Jesus between the time when he was an infant, and that in which he was about twelve years old; though we are quite sure that he was contented, meek, loving, obedient, and holy, both toward God and man.

It was the custom of the Jews, in the spring of the year, to keep the feast of Passover in the great city of Jerusalem. At such a time, they

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met in small parties, and ate together a roasted lamb and bitter herbs. The blood of the slain lamb was sprinkled on the doors of all the houses in the city. These things were done, that the Jews might not forget how God had kept their fathers safe on the night when an angel slew the first-born child in all the families of Egypt. See Exodus xii.

When Jesus was about twelve years old, he was taken by his mother, and Joseph her husband, to this feast. It was a long journey, of about seventy miles, for them to travel, from Nazareth, their dwelling-place, to Jerusalem. In those days, there were not the smooth roads we have now in our land; and, as the family were poor, they no doubt walked all the way, and had not many comforts on the road.

As Jesus was born of the Jewish nation, he kept all the laws which God had told that people to obey. He knew the *full* design and meaning of the Passover, and all the other services of the Jews, though they did not. He knew that the blood of the lamb was a type, figure, or sign of

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his precious blood, which should be offered in sacrifice—not on an altar, but on the cross. He was, and still is, “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

Joseph and Mary stayed a week in Jerusalem, and then prepared to return to their homes. After they had gone a short distance on the way, they missed Jesus. At first, they thought he was with some of their friends behind, or that he was in the company of some of those who had gone on before. But as the evening came on, when travellers put up their tents to rest themselves for the night, they became more concerned that they could not find him. Fearing he had been left in the great city, Mary and Joseph hastened back to the place, and sought for him three days in vain. How sad must have been her heart, when she thought she had lost her dear son, and when he was so far away from home! At last she found him, but where? It was in the temple. He was there, not gazing on the beautiful building, or the costly things within it;—he was found sitting among the doctors, or learned men of the Jews,

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“both hearing them, and asking them questions.” He was not now there as a teacher ; he was yet a child, and was humble and willing to learn. It was the will of God his Father that in our nature he should learn to obey.

We are not told what Jesus asked, or what he answered, though we do know he spoke so wisely and modestly, that they were astonished at what they heard. They had never listened to such a child before. It is said to be a custom among the Jews at the present time, on the last days of the feast of the Passover, for children to have the liberty to ask their rabbis, or learned men, any questions they choose. This may also have been the custom when Jesus was on earth.

When Mary had found her blessed Son, she said to him, “Why hast thou thus dealt with us ? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.” Then Jesus replied, “How is it that ye sought me ? wist ye not (or, Do you not know) that I must be about my Father’s business ? ” Whilst he was always obedient to his mother and to Joseph, who was supposed to be his earthly

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father, yet he wished them to remember that he had come to do the will of his heavenly Father.

We may be sure that Jesus spoke to his mother in a loving and proper manner. He did not refuse to return to his home. He soon left the temple, and went with her to Nazareth, where, as a child, he was still “subject to her;” that is, he loved and obeyed her as a dutiful son. He lived in her lowly home, shared her humble fare, and was the companion and kind friend of those who lived in the little town.

After this, all that is told us of the childhood of Jesus is, that “he increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”

Is it not wonderful that Jesus, who, as the Scriptures say, is “God over all, blessed for ever,” should come into the world himself had made; that he should come in our nature; that he should be the “Babe of Bethlehem,” the “Man of sorrows,” and at last die a painful and shameful death, and by his death atone for our sins? Surely, it was all in love and mercy to our race. But let us not forget, also, that he is a pattern to

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all ages, and in all the duties of life. "The Child Jesus" is the brightest and most perfect example for the young to copy. We may try to imitate the early piety of Moses and Samuel, or the zeal of young Josiah, or the meekness and charity of the little captive maid; but in Jesus there is everything that is lovely, wise, and good. He is the safest and best pattern. They were all sinners by nature and practice; but his nature was quite pure, and his whole life was without the least stain. As he loved the house and worship of his heavenly Father, as he was dutiful and obedient to his earthly parent, and as he was humble, gentle, and kind to all, so we should seek to be like him.

Oh! who would not wish to be like Jesus? That you may be so, seek the grace of his Holy Spirit every day. Pray that you may be able to follow him all the days of your life, and believe in him as your Redeemer and Saviour with all your heart; and then, as one of his children, you shall for ever dwell with him in glory.

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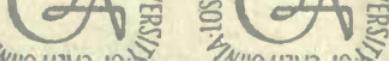
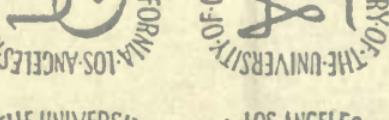
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